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ABSTRACT

This resource unit, developed by University of Minnesota's Project Social Studies as part of a course on Our Political System, introduces eighth graders to decision making at the local level. This unit, much shorter than the others in the course, attempts to have pupils use concepts learned earlier to analyze one or more crucial problems in their own community. Students identify and define problems to determine alternative ways of trying to solve them. A list of objectives is followed by an outline of content correlated to objectives, teaching procedures, and materials of instruction. A supplementary reading and bibliography conclude the unit. The teacher's guide is SO 007 511. (Author/KSM)

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Grade Eight
UNIT VI: DECISION-MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

VI

RESOURCE UNIT

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SO 007 513

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INTRODUCTION

This resource unit is short, since the emphasis is upon having pupils use concepts learned earlier in the course to analyze one or more crucial problems and political decision-making in relationship to these problems in their own community. If pupils live in smaller towns, they should contrast the problems and decision-making in their towns with that in the largest or nearest metropolitan area of their state. Since this unit is to be developed largely around local problems and decision-making, the outline of content can be suggestive only. It is suggested, that the unit begin with an identification and analysis of problems. Once pupils have studied the problems and analyzed different interests and groups involved and the causes of the problems, they can turn to ways in which people in the community are trying to solve these problems. This study should lead them to an analysis of power relationships, political institutions, and decision-making at the local level. It should also lead them to some analysis of relationships between the local and state government and perhaps even with the federal government. Once local problems have been used as case studies for the analysis of political decision-making, the teacher can have pupils study other aspects of the suggested outline of content which he feels have not been brought out clearly by the local study.

OBJECTIVES

This unit is designed to make progress toward developing the following objectives:

Generalizations:

1. The greater the population density and the more complex the technological system, the greater the need for more laws and for some institutions for changing laws.

2. The individual citizen in the political process approaches the political process with a complex of political attitudes, outlooks, values, and goals.

3. The interest group operates and attempts to bring influence to bear wherever in the political system public policy is being made.
   a. The interest group attempts to bring aggregates of influence to bear upon decision-makers by attempts to frame the possible choices that decision-makers have, by direct influence, by education, and by attempts to control the selection of decision-makers.
   b. The interest group serves an important role in activating and socializing its members into political activity.

4. Many factors affect decision-making in a democracy.
   a. The institutions of government constitute the arenas or the structure within which the authoritative decisions of the political process are made. (They limit access to decision-makers, they set the procedures of decision-making, they set the powers of the decision-makers, they informally distribute power and authority among decision-makers, and they set the boundaries and dimensions of the political playing field and fix the rules of the game played in it.)
   b. Any decision is in part a product of the internalized values and the perceptions of the persons making the decision.
   c. The decision-maker reacts to pressure from other decision-makers as well as to pressures from outside the government.

5. Attempts to abstract political decision-making from the pressures of the political system (from politics) have not succeeded.

6. Every legislature is directly a produ.. of the electoral and constituency systems which produced it; changes in these systems will bring changes in the composition and loyalties of the members.

7. The separation of powers is intended to and does produce institutional deadlock more often than parliamentary systems do.

8. Political power is unevenly distributed in a population even in a democracy; the concept of political equality or one man--one vote--insures only a minimum opportunity for influence.
   a. The unequal distribution of political power reflects the basic unequal distribution of resources, skills, and motivation in society.
   b. The unequal distribution of power reflects the fact of political organization; individuals join into aggregates to increase their political power by joining it with others.
   c. An individual may have power at one point in the political system but not at another; that is, political power relates to specific points of decision-making within the political system. (An individual's particular expertise may give him influence with one type of decision-maker but not with another.)
   d. Political power may rest in formal government positions but it need not.

Skills

1. Attacks problems in a rational manner.
   a. Is alert to incongruities, recognizes problems, and is concerned about them.
   b. Selects problems to study according to specific criteria.
   c. Defines problems by isolating the basic issue, defining terms, identifying assumptions and values involved, and determining sub-problems which must be investigated.
   d. Considers possible hypotheses and/or alternative courses of action.
   e. Considers possible consequences of alternative courses of action.
   f. Sets up ways of testing hypotheses.

2. Locates information
   a. Uses Statistical Abstract
   b. Uses State Legislative Manual
   c. Uses census volumes
   d. Skims to locate information in newspapers.
   e. Locates sources of information by using telephone directory.

3. Gathers information

a. Gains information through interviews.
b. Draws inferences from tables, graphs, and charts.
c. Listens to structured speeches for main ideas, supporting details, and to evaluate what is said.
d. Increases the accuracy of his observations through the use of questionnaires.
e. Uses simple sampling techniques.

4. Evaluates information

a. Identifies bias of sources.
b. Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information (including persuasion devices.)

5. Organizes and analyzes information and draws conclusions.

a. Applies previously-learned concepts to new data.
b. Checks, refines, and eliminates hypotheses and works out new ones where necessary.
c. Having determined the causes of a social problem, scrutinizes possible consequences of alternative courses of action, evaluates them in the light of basic values, lists arguments for and against each proposal, and selects the course of action which seems most likely to prove helpful in achieving the desired goal.

Attitudes

1. Feels a sense of responsibility for keeping informed about current problems.

2. Has a sense of responsibility for taking informed action about problems.

3. Searches for evidence to disprove hypotheses, not just to prove them.

4. Sceptical of single-factor causation in the social sciences.

5. Sceptical of panaceas.

6. Sceptical of the finality of knowledge; considers generalizations and theories as tentative, always subject to change in the light of new evidence.

7. Evaluates proposals on the basis of their effects upon individuals as human beings.

8. Values institutions as a means of promoting human welfare, not because of tradition; is willing to change institutions as times create new problems.

OBJECTIVES

G 1. The greater the population density and the more complex the technological system, the greater the need for more laws and for some institutions for changing laws.

S I s alert to incongruities, recognizes problems, and is concerned about them.

S Selects problems to study according to specific criteria.

A FEELS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR KEEPING INFORMED ABOUT CURRENT PROBLEMS.

OUTLINE OF CONTENT

I. Local governments face different kinds of problems depending upon their size and location and type of economy.

A. Cities and suburban areas face many problems today.

1. Cities and suburbs face growing problems as the result of rapid population growth.

a. There is a need to expand government services for police and fire protection.

b. There is a need to expand the educational system where there is a sharp increase in the number of children.

c. There is a need to provide good water supplies and proper sewage disposal in suburbs which have grown rapidly.

d. There is a need to provide transportation facilities both within cities and to get people to and from downtown areas from suburbs.

e. There may be increased need for welfare services as many people from poorer sections of the country come to the cities.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

MATERIALS OF INSTRUCTION

1. Ask: Which level of government do you think affects your daily lives more: national? state? or local? Why? Remind pupils that they have focussed thus far upon national and state governments. In this unit they should try to decide whether or not the concepts they have learned in earlier units will help them make sense out of ways in which local governments attack problems.

2. Have pupils list all of the important problems which they think face their own local government. They might consult with their parents and add to this list. Then after such consultation, the class should discuss each problem briefly, on the basis of existing knowledge, to decide which problem or problems to focus upon during this unit. Set up criteria for choice of problems. The class may decide to select only one problem or it could divide into groups to study two or three problems. They should analyze these problems in terms of the major concepts which they have studied during the year. Have pupils try to list these concepts and major questions to be studied about each problem. (The teacher may wish to review the questions raised by Sorauf in the overview for the year.) They will want to study such questions as: What is the conflict involved? Who are the parties to the conflict? How have people with the same interests in the conflict attempted to bring influence to bear upon decision makers? Who are the decision-makers? What factors will affect their decision-making?

S. Uses Statistical Abstract.
S. Uses State Legislative Manual.
S. Uses census volumes.
S. Skims to locate information by using telephone directory.
S. Gains information through interviews.

f. Cities and suburbs face problems in raising taxes to provide for the expansion of old services and to meet expenses of new ones.

B. Smaller towns face different kinds of problems, sometimes related to loss of population or to poor economic conditions in the area. (They are also affected indirectly by problems facing metropolitan areas of their state.)

C. Some of these problems are problems which can be solved by cities or towns themselves; others cross local boundaries and involve a much larger metropolitan area.

II. There are a number of causes for these problems facing local governments.

S. Defines problems by isolating the basic issue, defining terms, identifying assumptions and values involved, and determining sub-problems which must be investigated.

(Include here such factors as governmental structure, political attitudes of decision-makers, etc.) If the class analyzes several problems, they should try to decide if the decision-makers have been the same in all cases. Have the same interest groups played a part? If pupils live in a metropolitan area, they should be urged to include at least one problem arising out of the nature of a metropolitan area. If they do not live in such a community, have the class spend some time studying some of these problems related to a metropolitan area in their own state. Discuss ways of collecting information about these problems. What sources are there which they can use? Review interview techniques.

3. Before pupils begin their work, have them try to decide upon a logical approach citizens might use to study local problems. (e.g., What is the problem and how serious is it? What are the causes of the problem? What are possible alternatives which might be used to solve it or make it less serious? What are the probable consequences of each alternative? In terms of values held, which alternative seems to be the best to use?) Point out to pupils that as they study this unit, they will use a problem-solving approach, but they will also be analyzing the workings of the local political system. In addition to examining alternatives in terms of possible effects, they should consider factors which might affect decisions about the problem.

4. Now have pupils spend some time identifying more clearly the problems which they have selected to study. They should try to decide just what the problem is and how serious it is. If committees are working on different problems, let each prepare a bulletin board display on its problem. If the

S. Sets up hypotheses.
S. Sets up ways of testing hypotheses.
S. Checks, refines, and eliminates hypotheses, working out new ones where necessary.
A. SEARCHES FOR EVIDENCE TO DISPROVE HYPOTHESES, NOT JUST TO PROVE THEM.
A. SCEPTICISM OF SINGLE-FACTOR CAUSATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.
S. Listens to structured speeches for main ideas, supporting details, and to evaluate what he hears.
S. Checks on the bias of sources.
S. Distinguishes relevant from irrelevant information (such as persuasion devices.)

entire class is working on one problem, have a committee prepare a bulletin board display featuring the main aspects of the problem.

5. Have pupils set up hypotheses about possible causes of the problems they are studying. Some of these may be their own ideas and some will have been suggested to them as they studied the problem in more detail. What kinds of data might they collect to try to check their hypotheses? Review scientific attitude toward role of hypotheses and importance of trying to disprove them. Now have them try to collect data and come up with at least tentative conclusions about causes of the problems.

   It will be wise to vary actual study of the causes with other activities such as the following, in order to provide different activities during each class hour.

   a. Have pupils bring local newspapers to class and scan them for items about the problems. Does any article report possible causes? If so, what?

   b. Invite a guest speaker to class to discuss his views of the causes. Before pupils hear the first speaker, review techniques for listening for the main idea, supporting details, and to evaluate what is said. Also review techniques for note-taking on structured speeches.

   c. Have pupils make tables, graphs, charts, etc. to show different causes.

   d. Have pupils analyze letters to the editor about the problem. They should look for suggestions of possible causes and the kinds of evidence presented, if any. They should also examine the letters for persuasion devices and bias.

A. The individual citizen in the political process approaches the political process with a complex of political attitudes, outlooks, values, and goals.

III. The political culture of the city or town will affect how these problems are handled or even if the government will make increased attempts to solve them.

A. The political culture includes attitudes toward the problems themselves--how important people think they are to solve.

B. The political culture includes attitudes toward the role of government in trying to solve these problems.

C. Most dwellers are agreed on the need for certain kinds of services, but there is conflict over some programs. Moreover, many oppose increased taxes even to expand old services to meet problems arising from growing population.

Discuss: How effective do you think letters to newspapers are in influencing political decisions at the local level? Perhaps have pupils write some of the local officials to ask them their view of this question.

e. Have pupils examine newspapers to see if they can find any reference to similar problems in other cities and towns. What possible causes are listed for them?

f. Have pupils change their bulletin board displays to add causes of the problems to each.

6. Discuss: Are these problems the kind which are likely to be referred to the local political system? Why or why not? What is the general attitude of the local citizens toward the seriousness of these problems and toward the role of the government in trying to solve them? What agreement do you think there is? What disagreement? (Let pupils discuss briefly, without coming up with the final answers. However, they should become aware of the need to find out about the degree of agreement on these matters. Point out that if there is agreement or near agreement on these matters, these attitudes would be part of the political culture of the group.

S. Considers possible hypotheses and/or alternative courses of action.

S. Considers possible consequences of alternative courses of action.

S. Checks, refines, and eliminates hypotheses, working out new ones where necessary.

IV. There are a variety of solutions proposed for these problems; solutions have consequences not related directly to the problems which they are designed to solve.

G3. The interest group operates and attempts to bring influence to bear wherever in the political system public policy is being made.

G3a. The interest group attempts to bring aggregates of influence to bear upon decision-makers by attempts to frame the possible

V. Cities and towns include groups with different political goals, all of which cannot be achieved. People work through many interest groups as well as through political parties to try to achieve these goals.

A. Business groups frequently play an important role in political affairs of local communities.

B. Labor organizations sometimes play an important role in political affairs.

7. Now have pupils set up lists of possible courses of action which they can think of or have come across. Where possible they should list groups whom they think would support each course of action. Is there any conflict between these different courses of action? If so, what? Why? Have pupils set up hypotheses about possible consequences of each course of action. Then have them consider data which might be collected to test such hypotheses.

8. Have pupils study alternative courses of action, collecting data from their own town and from other places which have tried such approaches. They should also study the process by which the local government is attacking these problems. Who are the decision-makers (in actuality as well as in terms of official office)? What factors are affecting their decision-making? (Examine effects of governmental structure, attitudes of decision-makers, pressures from interest groups, etc.) Since pupils will need some days to make such a study, you will probably wish to interrupt the committee work by activities such as the following:

   a. Pupils might collect clippings about the problems and use them in their study or in bulletin board displays.
   b. Pupils might prepare bulletin board displays on various alternative courses of action.
   c. Have pupils study newspaper accounts to identify different interest groups trying to influence decisions about the problems.
   d. Invite several representatives of different interest groups to come to class to discuss their views of each problem being studied.

choices that decision makers have, by direct influence, by education, and by attempts to control the selection of the decision-makers.

G3b The interest group serves an important role in the activating and socializing of its members into political activity. (Much of the leverage an interest group has on a political party involves its ability to activate its membership and "deliver" it to the candidates of the party.

G4 Many factors affect decision-making in a democracy.

G4a The institutions of government constitute the arenas or the structure in which the authoritative decisions of the political process are made. (They limit access to decision-makers, they set the procedures of decision-making, they set the powers of the decision-makers, they informally distribute power and authority among decision-makers, and they set the boundaries and dimensions of the political playing field and fix the rules of the game played in it.

S Applies previously-learned concepts to new data.

C. Ethnic and racial groups may attempt to achieve certain goals through the political system.

D. The local press may be important in influencing local affairs.

E. Special interest groups such as educational groups may affect specific kinds of goals related to their interests.

F. Groups such as the League of Women Voters may try to affect the structure of government or the efficiency and honesty of government.

G. Political parties play an important role in some towns and cities.

VI. Decision-making in the local political system is affected by many factors.

A. Cities and towns are limited by what they can do by state legislatures and by the federal constitution.

1. Cities and towns are creatures of state legislatures. Their powers are set up by the legislature, and the legislature can give or refuse power to levy different kinds of taxes or to do certain things. The legislature may add to or decrease these powers.

2. City charters set up certain kinds of political institutions whose structure affects how things will be done.

e. If special interest groups have been formed to fight or work for a particular course of action related to this problem, have a pupil interview its chairman or have him speak to the class about how the group was organized and how it is working to achieve its goals.

f. If there is a local League of Women Voters, ask a representative to tell class about its role in these political conflicts.

g. Have several pupils report on interviews with local political party leaders about the role of the parties, if any, in their conflicts.

h. Have pupils read a brief excerpt from a dittoed sheet on the relationship of local governments in their state to the state government. They should find out whether or not their state government has granted their town home rule or not, and if so, what powers this also gives them.

i. Have pupils read brief text accounts of different kinds of local government structures and the pros and cons of each. Then have them find out what kind their town or city has. Several pupils might interview representatives of the League of Women Voters and various interest groups about their views on the values of the existing type of government in their town. (This would be of particular use if there is a current controversy about changing the form of government.)

j. On the chalkboard set up two different types of city councils, one with members elected at large and one with members elected by districts. (Which does their town have?) Now ask: How do you think each system would affect the council in terms of type of people elected and their role perceptions?

G7 The separation of powers is intended to and does produce institutional deadlock and delay more often than parliamentary systems do.

G5 Attempts to abstract political decision-making from the pressures of the political system (from "politics") have not succeeded. (The city manager device and non-partisan elections have not succeeded in removing decision-making from politics.)

G6 Every legislature is directly a product of the electoral and constituency systems which produces it; changes in these systems will bring changes in the composition and loyalties of the members.

a. Some towns have commission, some mayor-council, some city-manager forms of government. Each affects decision-making in slightly different ways.

b. Towns with mayor-councils may have strong mayors or very weak mayors. In cities with weak mayors, it is very difficult to hold any group responsible for actions or to get many things done.

c. City elections may be non-partisan, although non-partisan elections do not take public officials out of politics.

d. Cities and towns may have weak or strong civil service systems; strong systems remove much of the patronage power of mayors or political officials and so in a sense weaken their power.

3. Cities are limited in law enforcement and some other areas by the Bill of Rights and other rights guaranteed by the federal constitution.

G8 Political power in unevenly distributed in a population even in a democracy; the concept of political equality or one man--one vote, insures only a minimum opportunity for influence.

B. Decision-making is affected by the power structure in the local community, both because of the attitudes of the key decision-makers and because of the kinds of influence upon them.

G8a The unequal distribution of political power reflects the basic unequal distribution of resources, skills, and motivation in the society.

G8b The unequal distribution of power reflects the fact of political organization;

1. There are two different theories about decision-making in local government. Both may be true in different towns and cities. The theories represent a continuum, and many towns and cities may fall somewhere between the two extremes.

k. Ask: Can you think of any instances in which local governments have been limited by the federal government? How? Why? (Review Little Rock case and some of the judicial decisions.)

l. A good student might report on the Atlanta, Georgia study which supports the elitist theory of decision-making in cities. Or the teacher may wish to summarize this information on ditto sheets or project some of the tables and charts from the study. Pupils could use these tables to draw inferences about

Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure.

individuals join into aggregates to increase their political power by joining it with others.

G8c An individual may have power at one point in the political system but not at another; that is, political power is related to specific points of decision-making within the political system. (An individual's particular expertise may give him influence with one type of decision-maker but not with another.)

G 8d Political power may rest in formal governmental positions, but it need not.

S. Draws inferences from charts, tables, and graphs.

a. The elitist theory claims that a relatively few important leaders wield the power in the community on all important political decisions. They may or may not hold political office. If they do not, the political officials carry out their decisions.

b. The pluralist theory claims that political decisions are compromises resulting from contests between different groups and individuals. Some groups are more likely to have power in one area, other groups in another area.

c. In small towns there may be such homogeneity of political culture and interests that the leaders merely try to carry out the common political culture of the area. Power may be distributed widely, or there may be an elitist group.

d. In many cities and towns, there is probably a situation somewhere between the elitist extreme and a pluralistic extreme.

the number of decision-makers in this city at the time of the study. Be sure to point out the date of the study, so that pupils will not assume that the situation today is necessarily the same.

m. Another good student might report on the New Haven study or the teacher could again summarize the information on ditto sheets or use tables from which pupils might draw inferences.

Robert Dahl, Who Governs?

n. Now have pupils compare these two theories. Do they think that all towns and cities would fit one or the other? What other possibilities might there be? Perhaps draw a line on the board showing these two ideal types and perhaps even a third ideal type of a small town in which there is even greater sharing of decision-making. Now have pupils try to decide, on the basis of their studies this far, how their town would fit on this scale. The extent to which you could have pupils study their own town in terms of kinds of questions asked in the Hunter or Dahl studies, would have to depend upon the attitudes of the community toward such a study. However, it would be possible to do a small opinion poll to get at some of the same kinds of questions asked by political scientists in order to gather information about the degree of elitism or pluralism in decision-making in the community.

See also the analysis by Robert Presthus in Men At The Top.

G4b Any decision is in part a product of the internalized values and the perceptions of the persons making the decision.

G4c The decision-maker reacts to pressures from other decision-makers as well as to pressures from outside the government.

2. Political decision-making is affected by the attitudes of the decision-makers as well as by the influences brought to bear upon them by other government officials and by the public.

G4 Many factors affect decision-making in a democracy.

C. Decision reached in these problems were affected (or will be affected) by the above factors.

S. Uses simple sampling techniques.

S. Increases accuracy of observations through the use of questionnaires.

A. HAS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR TAKING INFORMED ACTION ABOUT PROBLEMS.

o. Several good students might prepare written analyses of some of case studies on local government in Beloit. They might then work together as a committee to discuss ways in which the kinds of problems differed and the factors affecting decision-making differed or were similar from factors studied earlier in the year at the state and national level.

Warner E. Mills, Jr. and Harry R. Davis, Small City Government, Seven Cases in Decision-making.

p. Or divide pupils into three groups, each to read of the following case studies: "The Case of the Bothersome Bees," "The Case of the Crowded Corral," or "The Rerouting of Highway 51." Then hold a general class discussion on the same questions mentioned in procedure #o. Pupils should use examples from their case studies during the discussion.

q. A committee might attend with the teacher a meeting of the local council or commission as it discusses one of the problems being studied. Or it might attend a public hearing held on the problem.

r. Pupils might conduct an opinion poll of a sample of parents or of the adults in their school district about their attitudes toward the issues. If they do so, be sure to get approval from school authorities. It would also be wise to send out a letter with each pupil working on the poll, explaining its purposes. It might be possible to get the local newspaper to ruan a brief article about the study. Review sampling techniques and importance of wording of questions before pupils begin project. Later, pupils may wish to report their findings to the local governmental authorities or to the newspaper. They should discuss the implications of the poll in class. If they were decision-making officials, would the results affect their decisions? Why or why not?

A. SCEPTICISM OF PANACEAS.

S. Having determined the causes of a social problem, scrutinizes possible consequences of alternative courses of action, evaluates them in the light of basic values, lists arguments for and against each proposal, and selects the course of action which seems most likely to prove helpful in achieving the desired goal.

A. EVALUATES PROPOSALS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR EFFECTS UPON INDIVIDUALS AS HUMAN BEINGS.

A. SCEPTICAL OF THE FINALITY OF KNOWLEDGE: CONSIDERS GENERALIZATIONS AND THEORIES AS TENTATIVE, ALWAYS SUBJECT TO CHANGE IN THE LIGHT OF NEW EVIDENCE.

s. Discuss: What other factors do you think will influence (or have influenced) the decisions on these issues we are studying? Why?

t. Pupils might prepare charts, graphs, tables, etc. to use in presenting arguments for or against each alternative course of action.

9. Now hold a general discussion on alternative courses of action if if the class has focussed upon one problem. If groups have studied different problems, let each group present its recomendations as if it were an interest group trying to influence the local government officials (represented by representatives from the rest of the class). Afterwards, discuss: Did your studies confirm or contradict your earlier ideas about possible consequences of each course of action? Why?

G4 The institutions of government constitute the arenas or the structure within which the authoritative decisions of the political process are made. (They set the procedures of decision-making and they limit the powers of the decision-makers.)

A. VALUES INSTITUTIONS AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING HUMAN WELFARE, NOT BECAUSE OF TRADITION; IS WILLING TO CHANGE INSTITUTIONS AS TIMES CREATE NEW PROBLEMS.

VII. In some metropolitan communities where problems cut across local government lines, cities and suburbs have tried to solve problems by several different kinds of cooperative approaches.

A. In some cases they must agree to work together by combining fire departments, etc. so as to avoid the heavy costs of each purchasing some of the more expensive specialized equipment.

B. In some cases they get the state legislature to set up special metropolitan districts to handle specific problems such as water, sewage or transportation.

C. In a few cases state legislatures have agreed to set up federated metropolitan governments in which a wider government handles problems which cut across the town boundaries, and the local governments retain control over the more local problems.

10. If pupils have not dealt with possible metropolitan agencies as one means of solving specific metropolitan problems studied, suggest a problem which might be solved by cooperation and have pupils try to think of possible ways of working out such cooperation. What group would have to approve such cooperative enterprises?

11. Have a pupil investigate any case of local cooperation of an informal variety among separate governments within a metropolitan area. If there are none, have them suggest possible types of cooperation with the pros and cons of each.

12. Perhaps have a pupil or committee present information to the class on a special metropolitan district in the state -- if there is one -- or on one in another state. The information could be presented in the form of:

    a. A panel discussion or symposium
    b. A mock hearing before a state legislative committee on whether or not this agency has proved effective
    c. A bulletin board display
    d. A written summary

13. Perhaps give pupils a brief chart to illustrate a federated metropolitan government. If such a government were organized in a metropolitan area in their own state, what kinds of powers might be delegated to it? Discuss pros and cons of such a government.

Perhaps invite people interested in such proposals to come to class to discuss them.

14. Hold a summary discussion on local government decision-making. How useful were concepts studied in earlier units?

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The city of today is facing the pressures of rapid expansion. Before the Civil War only 15% of the United States population lived in cities. Today over two-thirds of the population is urban. Much of this urban population is spilling over city boundaries into suburbs, forming large metropolitan centers and strip cities. Many of the urban newcomers represent varied ethnic and racial cultures and mores. They feel the social unrest and tension of the 1960's drives for integration and equality of human rights. This expanding population--heterogeneous, restless, and ambitious--presents two serious problems for the local political community: the expansion of government services and the payment for them. The affluent and continually larger local community requires both an increase in the number of government services and an extension of existing services to the newcomers. To pay for these government activities the local government must exercise its prerogative to tax to a continually greater degree and in doing this it must compete with many other units of government for their share of the taxes.

A certain specialized vocabulary is needed to talk about politics in the local community. Such terms as the commission, mayor-council, and city manager forms of government and district and at-large, partisan and nonpartisan election systems describe the institutional framework of local government. These terms need to be understood because they are used commonly in every day language. They are also important for a knowledge of politics. They describe the foundations, legal limits, and many governmental relationships within which the actual operation of the political process is conducted.

The political culture of an area also acts as a prescription of limit of governmental activity. By "political culture" is meant those ethics, values, goals and demands by which the political system is defined by its members. These commonly accepted views can act to forbid or limit certain governmental activity or to demand certain services.

Within these two frameworks of institutions and political culture, the political process of the local community operates. A general overview of the political process which acts within this framework can connect the general focuses of local government inquiry. The people, in the form of groups, organized to achieve certain goals. They make demands for the solutions of certain problems or satisfaction of specific interests upon the leaders of the community, usually those holding local government office. Those leaders with the ability to change the existing situation make decisions for the community. Administrative bureaucracies carry them out.

Simple though this sounds, in reality it is much more complex. Within a complex and heterogeneous city or metropolitan area no one problem exists, reaches a solution, and is settled. Simultaneously many demands and decisions are made by groups and individuals which continually interact in a reciprocal fashion. Yet overly simple as it is, this analytic scheme provides logical focuses by which a student can learn about local politics.

A. The Problems of Local Government are of two kinds: providing services and paying for them. The services of local government are in a sense strictly their own. They deal with the most fundamental of government functions--so fundamental that they are often performed unnoticed. For instance, the local government takes care of the building and maintenance of streets, the regulation of transportation, the provision of police and fire protection, various types of welfare services, schools, recreation facilities and water. When these services are performed satisfactorily, the citizens take little notice.

Yet with the expansion to new services and extension to the continually larger numbers of people, the cost of providing these services has greatly increased. This has forced the local government to raise the rates of existing tax resources and to find new kinds of tax levies. Taxing problems have resulted in two controversies in the local scene. The first is over the increase in tax rates. Many feel the government is costing them too much as it is. Another is over the extension of government operations into new areas of service. Welfare is a good example. Relief to indigents and aid to unwed mothers is an area in which, besides costing the cities more in tax dollars, many citizens and groups may feel the government should not meddle. Other groups feel that here is an area in which the government must step in to offer relief and alleviate a social problem. These two kinds of disagreement cause much of the conflict within the local political system.

B. Group Representation in the Local Political Process

The demand of one person upon government may be pretty ineffectual.. If many people, with similar attitudes or similar goals, join together, even in an unorganized fashion, their demands are more likely to be heard. Even with the myriad differences in local governments some common groups are usually active within the political process.

The businessmen may play a prominent role in local politics. Sometimes they supply the personnel for public office. In other areas they themselves make the political decisions. In other ways their cooperation is needed, as in such government projects as urban renewal and area development.

Organized labor may also be an agency providing civil leadership or a strong basis of political support. In some cases its consent is needed in pioneering new services for government.

The ethnic and racial groups have traditionally also been important forces within city politics, especially as blocs of voters whose interests must be taken into consideration. Although ethnic politics is disappearing, the importance of racial groups, especially the Negro, is gaining importance. The Negro population is finally becoming very anxious to achieve the same status as any other citizen and is working to eleminate many legal barriers to racial equality, many of them imposed by local ordinances.

Other groups also are important. The press, an over-all actor in the city scene, exercises its ability to influence judgments by propagating its opinions on subjects of local importance. The "do-gooders" groups, such as the League of Women Voters, try to impress their values of honesty and efficiency in government upon the operations of politics. The political party, of greater importance in some areas than in others, with its policy programs and followings of voters, can be a powerful pressure upon local politics.

These kinds of groups represent the interests of the citizens of an area, influence the formation of publics, and wage the conflicts which are decided by the men in power in the local area.

C. The Decision-Makers in Local Politics

Those men who make the decisions affecting the allocation of resources for government services are an important focus in the study of local politics. Generally in political science two different theories have been advanced as to the kinds of power structures formed by those making the political decisions of a locale.

The first one, the elitist theory, claims that relatively few crucially important top leaders are the wielders of power within the community. These same few people make all the decisions of political importance, The advocates of the elitist view point to Atlanta, Georgia, as their main example. A study of that town revealed that a small elite of businessmen dominated all decision-making. Both the lesser members of the business community and the elected government officials acted as those who operated the machinery which executed the decisions of the community elite. To a great extent, this approach ignores the group interaction of the community. It may be possible that in communities where this type of decision-making exists that interest groups may be of little importance in the political process.

Studies of other local communities have revealed an alternative arrangement of decision-makers. The pluralists, as they are called, maintain a more dynamic system of power relations.

Political decisions are compromises resulting from the contests of various groups and individuals acting to propagate their values and further their own goals. Different groups, individuals, and publics center their attention upon different areas of concern to local governments. Even those who make the decisions vary from area to area. One example should suffice here. In New Haven, Connecticut, those men who decided school policies were found to be different people from those who made the decisions regarding the implementation of urban renewal in the area. The only man found to enter into both decisions was the mayor and he actually had little to do with the school decisions. Also, the interest groups which worked for decisions of school policy were entirely different from those interested in urban renewal.. Another way of describing this power set-up is to say that various independent nuclei of leaders make decisions in different spheres of community activity.

These two types of structures of decision-making were found in large cities. In the small towns of rural America other forms of politics are practiced. Often in these homogeneous locales everyone knows everybody and the same social and cultural mores are accepted by all. Politics may pervade the whole area and a consensus on policy actions precludes much decision-making by the political leaders. Decision-making may be no more than maintaining agreement between the political culture of the area and the government services performed.

D. The Administration of Local Government

Like the President and governor, the mayor or city manager, besides having some policy making power, is usually also the executor of public policy. However, the local executive is often much more limited in his range of administrative power than his counterparts within the federal system. More than any other level of government the local level is beset with myriad independent commissions which may administer their areas of authority with little or no dependence upon the executive. For instance, park boards, school boards, and library boards abound in the local area with little reason to have any connection with the executive. Another factor limiting executive authority is that, with the drive to free local government from corrupt machine control by eliminating the tool of patronage, civil service systems and the election of administrative officials came into vogue. The denial of political appointment for many executives has meant less control over administrative heads who may have their own independent bases of political support.

However, many of the institutional limits upon the control of the mayor or city manager may be surmounted in extra-legal ways. A dynamic, forceful leader can win over otherwise independent administrators. Control of party apparatus is another means to be used in influencing administrative politics. Liaisons with the important

community groups concerned can aid in effectuating policy.

E. Metropolitics, the Extended Local Community

With the continuing increase in urban population people have migrated beyond the boundaries of the central city into the suburbs. New political problems, or at least increasing aggravations of the old ones, have been created by the increase in population. Transportation facilities have become overloaded; water supplies depleted, water pollution through inadequate sewage plants has become common; fire and police protection needs to be expanded. These are the services the central city has previously performed for the people of the area, all of whom lived within its boundaries.

With the spreading out of the population beyond the city's borders and the growth of the suburbs, many small local governments have been created. However, many of the problems these suburban governments are called upon to solve are not local in nature. They are metropolitan wide in scope.

Many devices, some ad hoc and some institutional, have evolved to take care of metropolitan problems. An example of ad hoc cooperation is an agreement among some suburban leaders to combine their fire departments so as to avoid duplication of capital expenditures for expensive fire fighting equipment. A popular institutional approach is the creation of special districts, institutions unhampered by ordinary geographical boundaries which perform usually one special function and have bonding and spending powers. These are especially popular in the field of education.

Some movements have advocated the creation of new metropolitan wide governmental units to take care of the problems which extend beyond the now existing political boundaries. Usually a federated plan is proposed leaving the very local problems in the hands of the existing political units and creating a new metro-wide layer of government to handle area wide problems. Plans of this sort have been adopted in Miami, Nashville, and Toronto, Canada. The Toronto plan has proved successful but the others have been in existence too short a time to pass judgment as to their effectiveness. However, considering the number of times plans similar to these have failed to meet with voter approval it would seem that most voters would rather get along with the inefficiencies of present systems than change the status quo.

Besides the metropolitan wide implications of suburbs the internal political operations of suburbs are an important area of study. The suburb has now lost its specific homogeniety of being an upper-class, Protestant, dormatory area. Now suburbs range from the mass constructed Levittowns to industrial areas with

factory towns connected to the average middle class community. Many are in themselves as heterogeneous as a city. Politically the suburb has been marked by its attempts to maintain the small local township form of government in which everyone participates in the making of government decisions. They want their governments to be kept free from politics. As a result of this attitude the nonpartisan election system and the city manager form of government predominate in the suburban community.

F. The Local Community Within the Federal System

The implications of local government do not stop at the local boundary nor even at the edge of the metropolitan area. Local government is related to both federal and state governments. Since federalism is considered elsewhere only two relationships need to be discussed here.

First of all the city is a creature of the state legislature. The original charter of incorporation comes from the state's lawmakers. Beyond this, state legislatures in varying degrees possess continual review of the local government's powers and the authority to expand them to meet the needs of new situations. The political operations of the local community are then often dependent upon state consent and the state legislature has the power to affectively intervene in local politics.

Since cities pass ordinances in the interests of public order which may involve the defining and processing of crimes involving the rights of all Americans protected in the Bill of Rights, the local community is also restrained by the federal Constitution and its interpretors, the federal courts. Its local ordinances must allow persons to practice their rights. Its local police actions must follow the rules prescribed by due process. Many of the civil rights cases heard each term by the U. S. Supreme Court are a result of alleged violation by local authority and local ordinances of citizens' rights. In this way the federal government, too, intervenes into the local scene.

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